

Dear Chairman Martin:

I am writing to discuss my concerns about the Comcast/Time Warner/Adelphia merger (FCC Docket No. 05-192) and the AT&T/BellSouth merger (FCC Docket No. 06-74). Allowing the largest telecommunications company and the two largest cable companies in the United States to grow even larger does not serve the public interest. Originally AT&T and the Bell companies were broken up to prevent monopolistic control over phone systems. This would undo all of those efforts.

The concentration of media power is a growing problem in this country. Though we have more channels available than ever before, they are increasingly falling under the control of a handful of giant corporations. The cost of broadband service also remains out of reach for many households. Americans are hungry for more competition in services. However, these mergers will only starve Americans of this needed competition. The FCC has to be counted on to stop this trend. Competition is NOT best served by limiting the number of smaller or start up companies. By permitting these mergers, you make it difficult, if not impossible for smaller companies to survive. Radio broadcasting should serve as a good example. All of the small broadcasters are gone. Just like in radio, the home-town, small, caring and community or at least regionally minded decisions will be made in some far away place that has little, if any concern about individual areas, regions or markets.

Allowing AT&T to combine with BellSouth will give the top three broadband providers control of over half of all broadband connections in the country. At the same time, the Time Warner/Comcast/Adelphia merger will give Comcast and Time Warner increased power over entire regions of the United States, allowing rates to rise even as the digital divide continues to grow.

The FCC should block these transactions or impose strict conditions to protect free speech and competition under its "public interest standard." If the FCC decides to allow either of these mergers, it should require the following conditions:

1. Subscribers must be able to choose from competitive Internet Service Providers ("open access"). The FCC should also ensure that these companies cannot discriminate against any Internet content or rival service and that every service will be treated exactly the same ("Network Neutrality").
2. Companies must be required to sell broadband access separate from video and telephone service, and at the same price ("naked broadband" or "unbundling"). I should not be required to purchase everything from a given provider and a provider should not be able to say that they only offer bundled packages.
3. Any subscriber must be able to connect any device to the network (such as a Wi-Fi router) that

does not harm the network. The service should only include the actual transmission protocols required, especially for networking and internet connectivity. Above all else, internet access needs to be readily available and free from carrier restrictions. It is essential in a free democracy and must be required to continue. The FCC should also require a save harmless clause if any merger is allowed: that if services and prices rise by more than the cost of inflation as determined by the CPI for the first five years , than the merger is reversed, or other measures be taken against the companies, such as a mandatory rebate, stiff fines etc.

4. Take steps to protect public access programming ("PEG"). Cable companies have become less responsive to the needs and requirements of communities. The quality of public accountability in local franchise agreements has declined, as big companies leverage their power to squeeze local governments. Likewise, telecommunications giants — like AT&T — are trying to eliminate the remaining vestiges of effective local oversight and control altogether.

5. Independent programmers must be able to reach subscribers. We are required to buy channels we don't want or need because providers of video service bundle them together. All of the locval programming requirements are going out the window.

6. Any company that owns both programming and video systems should be required to provide competitors with access to their regional sports and other programming needed to offer competing services, so consumers will still have real choices.

In conclusion, I ask the FCC to consider the interests of the people like me who pay the cable, telephone and broadband bills and watch the programming. Many of us already have enough trouble trying to afford broadband or cable TV. Please don't make it even harder for us to find competitors, or make it easier for Comcast, Time Warner and AT&T to raise prices or block local and independent voices.